GRAND VALLEY'S 1ST ALTERNATIVE NEWSPAPER

COHESION

THE RE-GIFTED FRUITCAKE ISSUE

[ISSUE NO. 4] [DEC. 10 2010]

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WANTED

Do you have mad skills in Advertising, Web Design, or other creative media? We want to hear from you!

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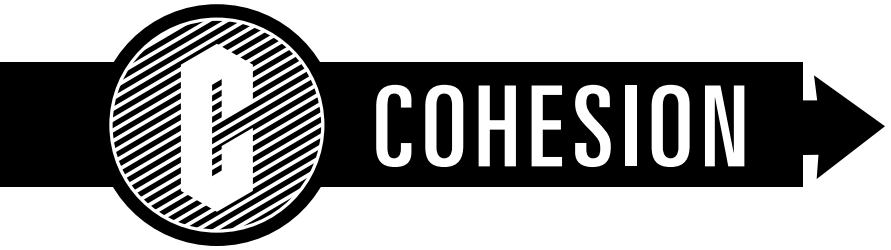

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Dear Cohesion,

In October, 2002, my wife and I were watching TV when the trailer for Steven Seagal's newest flick at the time, "Half Past Dead," played during the commercials. I mentioned that I thought that was a clever title for a movie, and ever since, my wife has gotten me a Steven Seagal DVD every year for Christmas. I fucking hate Steven Seagal. What's worse is that she's buying every movie of his in order of their release. It started with "Above the Law," and last year I got "Executive Decision." I looked up what I'll be getting this year, "The Glimmer Man," and it looks like it's going to be the worst one yet. I don't know how to break it to my wife that I despise this guy. She's so proud of herself every time I unwrap another one of his stupid cop movies. What should I do?

– S.O.S. (Sick of Seagal)

Dear S.O.S.

What a sweet wife you have. My girlfriend has been buying me self-help DVDs every year for Christmas. She won't leave me though because she likes my pigs-in-a-blanket, and I won't leave her because she gives a good hand shandy. But anyway. The answer to your problem is pretty simple. Go overboard. Pretend to develop an unhealthy infatuation with Steven Seagal. Do a little research, and find out everything that that sexy, stone-chiseled beast is into. See what I did there? Start talking about him like that, maybe even slip a "Steve" in during love making. Start taking martial arts classes, or better yet, just watch a handful of YouTube videos and practice what you see on some neighborhood kids. Start wasting a bunch of money on stupid stuff like Seagal memorabilia, or by taking trips to his hometown or places he has filmed. Buy her a shirt that says, "I'm with the Steven Seagal fan," and beg her to wear it every time you go out in public. When Christmas rolls around and she goes to buy your presents, she'll steer clear of the Seagal flicks because she won't want to contribute to your crazy behavior anymore.

– Reginald Watts

New Support Group For White Middle Class
Black Lung and Precious

"Dad had to sell the speedboat, Mom only gets pedicures once a week now, Grandma even sold her collection of mustache follicles she stole from Burt Reynold's dressing room (she was a big Smokey and The Bandit fan), just so she can make her bi-monthly trip to Reno."

These are the words of Grand Valley student, Cayton Boarderton, during his speech at a new support group for the white middle class. He went on to hush the room with invigorating quotes such as "We're not broke, we just don't have money for fun stuff. It blows." Later the audience applauded his closing words, "A spending limit? What the hell is that?"

The meetings begun as a way to talk out the hardships of having one's credit card declined after a day of binge shopping. It grew to accept all sorts of privileged youth, who felt as though their privilege was being questioned. In an interview with the groups founder, Ericka Erickson, she revealed some startling truths of our economic downfall. "My dad seriously, like, asked me to get a job. And I was like, 'Dad, are you serious?' And he was like, yeah."

Such saddening news may sound a bit depressing for this holiday season, but there is hope on the horizon. A recent study has shown parental suicide is on the upswing. Parents are losing their condos in Florida, and can't afford the good scotch; so a nice quiet drive and a semi-auto looks like the only way out. The white middle class support group is encouraging all trust fund children to take the time to make sure that mommy and daddy's Last Will and Testament puts you as the main beneficiary. So when parents don't come home, don't frown, now you can buy enough Adderal to get you through finals.

Coat Sale Drop Due to Weight Loss Program
Mina Pink
Professional Five Year Old

Stuff your face with too many sweets? Actually took a bite of Aunt Muriel's nuclear waste fruitcake ? Need an easy way to work off the holiday pounds? Then perhaps you should try the new weight loss program that has taken the snow-covered states by storm. Called Shiver Yourself Thin, this program calls for very little effort. As you run your holiday errands, simply don't wear a coat. The lower the temperatures, the more calories the body will burn to stay warm. This surely is a program that even the laziest of bums can do. The only habit that needs to be changed is one's outerwear. Those wanting to lose 10 lbs or more may turn the heat off in their houses, making this the only weight loss program that actually saves money. Doctors are unsure about long-term health benefits, but suggest that participants still wear gloves to protect their fingers from frostbite.

Realist Horoscopes

Reed Bramble

Aries: Tonight, your best friend will challenge you to a competition in which you each consume 400 to 600 milligrams of Ibuprofen PM and see who can stay awake the longest. I would tell you who wins, but where's the fun in that? All I will tell you is that a little bit of acetone might help get the permanent marker off your face faster.

Taurus: You forgot to put your initials on that box of cosmic brownies again. If you start running now, you might make it back in time to see your roommate handing them out to the neighbors and passers-by. Turns out he already gave away your Ben and Jerry's ice cream, too. I guess you'll have to find something else to drown your sorrows in.

Gemini: Today, your mom will quit smoking, not for the kids, but because she didn't want the dog to get secondhand smoke. Your boyfriend isn't going to call you today, so he must not love you. And I wouldn't even try buying that carmel macchiato from Java City, because you will be disappointed to find out that you debit dollars are insufficient.

Cancer: Later tonight, you will have a dream about being stuck in a room with Gramps as he talks for hours about his "adventures" in the Korean War. Depending on your personal taste, that could be a nightmare or a wet dream. While you are sleeping, your co-workers are having a party that they made sure you didn't find out about.

Leo: Hey, do you remember that time when you ran and worked out last month? Because I don't. And I remember everything.

Virgo: On this day, your grandmother will tragically tumble down her basement stairs to her death. Normally, I save this kind of stuff for the obituaries, but I thought you should know right away. No, it's on your mom's side. Oh, you didn't love her as much? Well, that's quite the relief. Now I don't feel nearly as bad for asking if she kept more strawberry jam in the cellar.

Libra: Today, you will quit your acting career to attend Grand Valley State University. After a casual yet intimate interaction on the bus, you will decide to give me your number. Our first date will be an extravagant dining experience at Uccello's Ristorante, filled with laughter and deep conversation, followed by a sensual evening back at my apartment (God, I hope Scarlett Johansson is a Libra).

Scorpio: Today, you will have no idea that your school's football team lost a playoff game to some random team in South Dakota. Until just now. The .01% of your soul that moderately cares will shed a mournful tear for their demise. Your professor will go out of his way to circle the F on your research paper in red sharpie, and the F doesn't stand for fantastic this time.

Sagittarius: Today, the 2% milk in your fridge is more than spoiled. But your roommate doesn't know that. I'll leave it up to you whether you want to tell them or not. The new Twilight movie that you have been waiting weeks for Netflix to have in stock will arrive at your mailbox in the form of a shattered DVD. I mean, they might as well have shattered your soul.

Capricorn: The first idea you have after reading this is going to be the next big thing. I mean like Facebook big. So get a patent on that, son. Because I see a bright future for you. That is, until someone comes along with a better idea. MySpace only lasted so long. It's the circle of life.

Aquarius: (The answer to the question on your mind is censored due the frequent use of profanity and vulgarity in my response. If you wish to hear the response and you are 18 or older, please call 616-331-2020 and state your name, favorite color, and the opening line from the movie "Citizen Kane." Then ask your question.)

Pisces: Today, your diarrhea will be explosive. If you think that no one can hear you, crouched in the bathroom stall, writhing in agony and painting the toilet a nice shade of brown, you are probably wrong. Maybe tonight isn't such a good night for the hot tub.

Out of Costume

Vincent James Perrone

Winner of SRS Horribe Holidays Reading

Talking to the dog with a white square on my tongue. The canine unit can't smell shit. Leash in hand, the cop's too cocky. Blonde and chiseled like he stopped by our stoop on his way back from Bermuda. I stub out a butt on the pavement and point toward the glass doors. We cackle up three flights of stairs, and I grab a notebook, only to lose it a few hours later. Ramone leans over to me, his hair a mess of black thread. An eye squinted like a broken headlight at the flurry of letters. I pause, gnawing on the pen cap

"What are you writing?"

"This."

He nods, somehow able to comprehend, while I stare at waving posers of monster trucks and playboy models and wonder when that girl, the one that's supposed to be my best friend, will arrive.

I get the call and try to contain myself, I lift an arm and swat at the television.

"Get into the clown car boys! We're heading out!"

They scamper like cockroaches, grabbing jackets and sweaters off the floor. One of them, Max I think, picks up a deflated balloon stuffs it into his breast pocket. I linger in the doorway, trying to catch a fat horse fly with one hand. I cross the room. The men, there were four of us, seem to be stuck in a loop, orbiting the room in sloppy figure eights, surveying the floor as if expecting to find something important. A working lighter or a good paperback, maybe a popsicle stick with a joke written on it, I couldn't say for sure. Back and forth and then again, it's rather difficult to organize people in this kind of frazzled state, nearly impossible, they change too much from moment to moment.

On the walk, we throw jokes, and listeners turned shy green, just like the cartoons.

"Lost his 10 dollar bill snortin' dandruff, hummin' he ain't no gold digger, but a coal miner workin' on his black lung vocab. And that's a fact."

Shouting maniacal verse like lobotomized ministers, we're the light at the bottom of the well, the speck of sanity in a petri dish of lunatics. Crowds of the dreary dead, pop stars, and self proclaimed sluts litter the street. Costumed horrors, on what's supposed to be a children's holiday. The ones in masks mumbling about "Where to get laid," or the volume of alcohol they've consumed, they're the worst. But hell, these people know what they're doing, that's what I tell myself, until I hear about a kid dead, mouth foaming with blood in some parking lot five blocks away.

But she's here now, the romantic interest that is, all hopped up on nostalgia and guilt, jingling coins at her waist. I don't think she was miserable yet.

"We're here now, you can't argue with that."

We were going to be siamese for the night, I had already decided. Thick or thin we'd shiver until sunrise while all the ghouls and whores slept off their hangovers in stranger's beds.

My friend tells me he can see the fear, but he's the one with a scarf wrapped around his head, just hopping his skull stays attached. He says the broken goggles tied at his neck are just in case he needs to see something important. Converge back to his shelter, and start our tricks again in the lobby. Playing a tuneless piano, someone shouts,

"Billy Joel!"

Turning towards the noise, my neck cracks and sends a shock straight to my fingertips.

"Play something nice!"

"I don't know anything nice."

Crashing my knuckles on every white and black tooth I can reach. Some devil without a bra looks anxiously at the yellowish glow on the other side of the window, a soft hue like jaundice. Her friends, fellow demons, pout at my atrocious playing. I don't give them an encore.

Shaking out beads of sweat on a red, filthy stairway, I try to explain my situation, while she palms a nearly empty bottle. The occasional sailor or construction worker or underdressed cop nudges past, without a tinge of tact. We run back an forth, between the noisy stairway and screaming streets, making the motions of the night.

Cigarette.

Interior.

Cigarette.

Muttering her name, trying to find the right way to say it. Telling her, with all the truth I can muster, "You might just be the most fucked up person I know. And I don't think I'll ever be able to fix that."

She tells me to leave, I play deaf, so she repeats the statement, softly slurring, or maybe it's my ears. Finishing her cranberry vodka, she strides inside, like someone twice her age. I'm unsure how many opportunities can be missed before they don't knock again.

Reminds me of a week ago, a bus stop and a balding middle-aged bachelor. Smirking with a crows feather mustache at the rain, his khaki pants stained with grease, he fumbles with his glistening hands. I see a tan line on the left ring finger. Breaking the peace he makes small talk and I try to play along.

"I haven't been with a woman in five months. You know the last time I went five months without being with a woman?"

The answer escapes me.

"When I spent a year in jail."

A bus approached, far too slowly for my liking.

Outside the bathroom, I feel my pulse and try to keep beat. The mirror just keeps repeating me, no real advice. Then off to a friends room, he gave me the keys out of desperation. It's a lot nicer with the lights off, the gaudy fluorescents don't help anybody. I can imagine her, though I know she's right in front of me.

"I hate this place," she proclaims, with good reason.

"Sorry." Rarely am I sorry for the right reasons, but I continue anyway. "I like you better out of costume."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, It's how you're suppose to be."

We sit down, she takes her purple boots off. I keep mine on.

Nudging her, "We're never going to be more than friends, are we?"

I smile at her answer in the shifting darkness, and listen to the screams from the courtyard and from the neighbors and from the parking lot. We don't make a sound.

Failed New Years Resolutions

- I will stop wearing my banana suit to parties
- I will avoid hitting pedestrians on campus
- I will quit crop dusting during church
- I will go to all my 8am classes, with all my clothes on
- I will stop stealing silverware and plates from Fresh
- I will stop buying airplane tickets just to get patted down by the TSA
- I will stop telling girls that it's just a cold sore
- I will learn a foreign language, preferably Pig Latin
- I will start using clean needles
- I will stop using craigslist to sell my body

Top 10 regifted gifts

- Wikileaks Furby's
- Steven Seagal movies
- My virginity
- The GV 50 year anniversary commemoration book
- Cohesion
- Blood plasma
- Grandma's wooden eye
- Doritos shaped like Meg Ryan
- Duct tape wallets from 4th grade
- Zunes?

What Cohesion is giving our families and friends

- Compete seasons of My Little Pony on VHS
- Cheese cloth
- Costco sized jugs of lentils
- Juicy Fruit Gum
- Depends adult diapers
- Webdings Label Makers
- Dennis Hopper's belly button lint
- Nuvaring pens
- Socks sewn into flip flops
- LFO CDs

A Word From Cohesion: Memories vs. Money

First off, I wish you all a happy holidays: Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, Christmas, and Yule.

This is our fourth issue of the year and I would like to thank the Grand Valley community for making it all possible. Without your continuous support, I would still be watching cheap 60's sci-fi movies alone in my apartment.

Enough with introductions, let's get to the subject of this message.

Our generation is a very special one, let me quote a USA Today article, from April of this year, "Their generation [generation Y] is the first in a century that is unlikely to end up better off financially than their parents."

With empty pockets, no job, and bad mutual funds, I'm sure many of you can relate to this. So, what does this mean in the holiday season? How do we show the people we love that we care about them?

Recently, an old friend asked me to put a monetary value on a human life. I responded with a question: what is the value of your time? How much is an hour of your life worth? I spent an hour talking to him and had to ask myself the same question.

How much happiness does a gift card bring? How about a new electronic that will be outdated in 2 years? a year? 6 months?

Why not make a card for your family instead of buying one? How about an evening out with some friends? Go somewhere you have never gone before; try something new.

How many memories has money given you? "He who dies with the most toys wins." Does anyone really believe that?

If buying a big screen for your family is how you show love, do it; every family is different. I have found that I would rather spend time, and have a conversation, instead of tearing open bags of re-gifting short-lived joy, year after year after year.

This is not an attack on commercialization, it's just a reminder that the holidays didn't come from JC Penny, or Jared's, or Coca-Cola.

Thank you for reading to my rant. I'd like to update you all on the happening with Cohesion.

Over the holiday break we are going to reformat Cohesion. Very soon we will have a website where we will have an art section as well as a Band of the Week, where we will be showcasing local bands in the area, as well as interviews. We will also have an open forum for you to talk about the GV community. In addition, there will be a current events page of local happening in the arts and social communities at Grand Valley.

If you would like to be part of Cohesion,
please send us an email at cohesiongv@gmail.com
We are in need of creative influences as well as staff writers.
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Without wax,
Andrew J. Wilt